

Message Text

SECRET

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ORIGIN SS-15

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EXDIS FOR STERNER

FOLLOWING REPEAT KUWAIT 4040 ACTION SECSTATE INFO ABU DHABI
ALGIERS AMMAN BEIRUT BONN CAIRO DAMASCUS DOHA JIDDA
KHARTOUM LONDON MANAMA MUSCAT OTTAWA PARIS RABAT ROME
TEHRAN TEL AVIV TUNIS USUN NEW YORK JULY 15.

QUOTE: S E C R E T KUWAIT 4040

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, PINT, LE, IS, SY, KU

SUBJ: LEBANON: NEXT STEPS TO DEFUSE CRISIS

REF: (A) STATE 174090 (NOTAL), (B) KUWAIT 3937, (C) KUWAIT 3862
(NOTAL)

SUMMARY: IN ATTEMPTING TO REVIEW LEBANESE CRISIS WITH SENIOR
GOK MFA OFFICIAL, I ENCOUNTERED NEAR-CONVICTION THAT USG IS
TOLERATING UNNECESSARY AND HARMFUL SUPPORT BY ISRAELIS FOR
CHRISTIAN MILITIAS. WHILE IT IS CLEAR THAT MFA OFFICIAL AND
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USG AGREE ON IMPORTANCE OF SUSTAINING PRESIDENT SARKIS
AND DOING ALL POSSIBLE TO REDUCE IMMEDIATE PROSPECT OF RENEWED
VIOLENCE, GOK PROBABLY TENDS TO BELIEVE SLANDER THAT USG IS
PLAYING AN UNDERHANDED ROLE THERE FOR THE BENEFIT OF ISRAELIS.
END SUMMARY

1. DURING MY CALL ON MFA ACTING UNDER SECRETARY JULY 15 I

ATTEMPTED, IN ACCORDANCE WITH REF A, TO REVIEW THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY IN THE LEBANESE CRISIS. I REMINDED ACTING UNDER SECRETARY OF OUR CONVERSATION ON THE SUBJECT JULY 5 AND SAID WE WERE PLEASED TO NOTE THAT FOREIGN MINISTER SHAIKH SABAH AL-AHMAD AL-JABER HAD SHORTLY THEREAFTER DELIVERED MESSAGES FROM THE AMIR TO BOTH PRESIDENT ASSAD AND PRESIDENT SARKIS.

2. ACTING UNDER SECRETARY INTERRUPTED TO TELL ME THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER, WHEN INFORMED OF MY REQUEST FOR KUWAITI GOOD OFFICES TO HELP RESTRAIN CONFLICTING FORCES IN LEBANON, HAD ASKED THAT I INFORM PRESIDENT CARTER THAT KUWAITIS WILL DO ALL THEY CAN TO RESOLVE THE CRISIS. HOWEVER, FOREIGN MINISTER WANTED US TO KNOW THAT HE FELT STRONGLY THAT WE SHOULD PUT DIRECT PRESSURE ON THE ISRAELIS TO RESTRAIN THEM FROM DELIVERING WEAPONS TO "AMERICA'S FRIENDS" IN LEBANON. I INTERJECTED THAT I HOPED THE EXPRESSION "AMERICA'S FRIENDS" DID NOT INDICATE HOW THE GOVERNMENT OF KUWAIT PERCEIVES THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA ORGANIZATIONS WHO HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH ISRAEL. I EMPHASIZED THAT WE HOLD NO SPECIAL BRIEF FOR THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND THAT WE HAVE IN FACT STRENUOUSLY URGED THE ISRAELIS TO REFRAIN FROM ENCOURAGING THEM. I SAID WE BELIEVED THERE WAS GOOD EVIDENCE THAT THE ISRAELIS HAD IN FACT LET THE CHRISTIANS KNOW THAT THE LATTER COULD NOT DEPEND UPON OUTSIDE SUPPORT IF THEY CONTINUED TO PROVOKE THE ARAB DETERRENT FORCE IN WHAT HAD LOOKED LIKE EFFORTS TO PRECIPITATE A SHOWDOWN.

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3. IT WAS APPARENT THAT ACTING UNDER SECRETARY THOUGHT I WAS EITHER MININFORMED OR ATTEMPTING TO DECEIVE HIM. (THE MORNING PAPERS TODAY HEADLINE ISRAELI RESUPPLY OF WEAPONS TO THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS, VIA THE PORT OF JUNIEH, SINCE THE MAJOR FIGHTING OF THE FIRST WEEK OF JULY.) HE ASKED ME QUESTIONS INDICATING FUNDAMENTAL DOUBT OF ISRAELI AND/OR AMERICAN SINCERITY. I REPLIED THAT I WAS CERTAIN THE ISRAELIS, THOUGH HAVEING MIXED FEELINGS, HAD INDEED LIMITED THEIR SUPPLIES TO THE CHRISTIANS. I WENT ON TO SAY THAT IT WAS VERY CLEAR THE ISRAELIS WOULD NOT TOLERATE A MASSACRE OF THEIR CHRISTIAN FRIENDS BUT THAT OUR CONTACTS WITH VARIOUS LEADERS IN BEIRUT SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT ISRAELIS HAD IN FACT TAKEN STEPS TO DISABUSE KEY CHRISTIANS OF THE NOTION THAT THEY COULD PROVOKE THE SYRIANS WITH IMPUNITY. I AGAIN (REF B) SPELLED OUT THE FACT OF CLOSE USG CONSULTATIONS WITH THE SYRIANS AND WITH A BROAD SPECTRUM OF LEADERS IN LEBANON AND EMPHASIZED OUR SUPPORT FOR SARKIS AND OUR OPPOSITION TO ANY PARTITION OF LEBANON. I REPEATED THAT WE ACKNOWLEDGE THE LEGALITY OF THE PRESENCE OF SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON AND BELIEVE THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED GREATLY TO THE MAINTENANCE OF THE COUNTRY. THEY SHOULD STAY ON AT THE WILL OF THE GOVERNMENT OF LEBANON. I TOLD THE ACTING UNDER SECRETARY, HOWEVER, THAT I PERSONALLY BELIEVED

THE ISRAELIS WOULD REACT VIGOROUSLY IF IT SHOULD APPEAR THAT SYRIA, PERHAPS IN SHEER FRUSTRATION, MOVED TO TAKE OVER LEBANON AS A WHOLE. I THOUGHT THIS MOVE MOST UNLIKELY AND CONTRARY TO THE POLICY OF ALL CONCERNED, INCLUDING THE SYRIANS.

4. THE ACTING UNDER SECRETARY AGREED WITH ME COMPLETELY ON THE IMPORTANCE OF PRESIDENT SARKIS REMAINING IN OFFICE. IF HE RESIGNED, HE SAID, THERE WOULD BE AN EXPLOSION. IN RESPONSE TO MY EXPOSE OF USG THINKING THAT THE IMMEDIATE NEED IS TO LOWER THE VOLUME OF HEAVY WEAPONRY IN PLAY, IN PARALLEL AS BETWEEN THE CHRISTIANS AND THE PALESTINIANS, HE REITERATED HIS BELIEF THAT THE USG, WHICH HAS SUCH GREAT INFLUENCE WITH SO MANY OF THE PARTIES, COULD HAVE THE MOST EFFECT BY PREVENTING ISRAEL FROM SUPPLYING WEAPONRY TO FORCES IN LEBANON.

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5. THIS DIFFICULT CONVERSATION ENDED WITH ACTING UNDER SECRETARY'S REASSURANCES TO ME THAT KUWAITIS WOULD CONTINUE TO DO ALL THEY COULD TO DEFUSE THE LEBANESE SITUATION, AND A REPETITION OF HIS REQUEST THAT WE DO MORE TO CUT OFF ISRAELI AID TO CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS IN THE COUNTRY. SUTHERLAND UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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